

Cameras in Court: 9th Circuit to permit cameras for first-ever Pocatello hearing

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When the 9th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals holds its **first-ever sitting in Pocatello** on May 24th, to hear oral arguments in two Idaho cases, it'll make history in another way as well: Cameras will be allowed in the courtroom.

Though cameras are allowed in courtrooms in most state courts, including Idaho's, under established rules and at the presiding judge's discretion, they're banned almost entirely in federal district courts. That crimps TV coverage of federal court proceedings, and is the reason why major federal court cases result in paintings created by sketch artists in courtrooms being published in newspapers and on TV - because actual photos aren't permitted.

The 9th Circuit has been interested in the issue for years, and has allowed cameras in its appellate-level proceedings since 1991; the Pocatello sitting is the latest example. A pilot program also is in the works, at the urging of the 9th Circuit Judicial Council, to have federal district courts in the circuit experiment with permitting cameras in civil non-jury cases, though none have done so yet.

A three-judge panel of the 9th Circuit court, including 9th Circuit Chief Judge Alex Kozinski, Senior Judge Stephen S. Trott of Boise and Judge Randy Smith of Pocatello, will hear the two cases in Pocatello; they are U.S. v. Alfaro, an appeal by a reputed gang leader from Boise who was sentenced to 150 months in prison on gun charges; and Community House Inc. v. Smith, an appeal by the city of Boise on an issue regarding the sale of a city homeless shelter to a religious group. For more on the cameras in the courtroom issue, check out [Idaho's state court rule here](#); a Reporter's Committee for Freedom of the Press [article on the recent California case that raised this issue here](#); a [TV reporter's perspective here](#); and here a [legal history of the issue](#) from the First Amendment Center.